Connecticut Historical Society BULLETIN

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SIMEON NORTH

The following catalogue of a Simeon North collection now on exhibition in our museum was prepared by B. F. Hubbell, Honorary Gun Curator of this Society. The collection, lent by J. Lincoln Fenn, Esq., is in excellent condition and may be seen daily from 9:30 A.M.-5:30 P.M. except Sundays and holidays.

Simeon North was born at Berlin, Connecticut, July 13, 1765. Being a natural mechanic, he began repairing firearms and made a few pairs of pistols for the New London seafaring trade. His excellent work soon necessitated larger quarters than the tool shed on his father's farm. He built a small gun shop on the nearby Mattabesett River. With additional help and modest equipment the business grew. The North & Cheney model was made here. In 1808 Congress authorized a yearly expenditure of $200,000 for arms and munitions. North received a portion of this business and his little gun shop soon became too small. The War of 1812 was in the offing and the water power was not sufficient during the summer months. He then began the modern Middletown factory. The first Middletown made pistols were made in 1814. North died August 25, 1852.

NORTH & CHENEY, (Berlin)
Contract of 1794. Calibre .69.

This was the first U. S. Government contract pistol for both Army and Navy and was copied principally from the French 1777 model. Apparently this piece is a North model with a pike set into the handle for additional effectiveness after the piece has been fired and then reversed in the fighter's hand for use as a club. The Government contract was for 500 pistols. Mr. Cheney was Simeon North's brother-in-law.

S. NORTH
BERLIN
CON.
Model 1811
Contracts of 1798-1812. Calibre .69.

This pair represents the second military contract model and were made both in Berlin, Connecticut, as well as Middletown, Connecticut. These apparently were factory models. The first 500 pistols of this model were completed at the original Berlin shop. The Middletown pistols came out later with the Wickham improved barrel band.

S. NORTH, Model 1819, Army & Navy

With safety on hammer & swivel ramrod. Calibre .54.

The safety on the hammer was designed for cavalrymen only but was soon discarded. Possibly 20,000 of this 1819 model were made for which North received $8.00 each.

S. NORTH, Model 1827, Army & Navy

Calibre .54.

This lighter model was made for both the Army and Navy, incorporating the swivel ramrod improvement and other improvements. This piece also has the Navy type belt hook. The Navy model was tin plated against the elements of the sea.

U. S. CARBINE, Model 1840

Hall's Patent, S. North's improved breech operating mechanism, 1st type.

U. S. CARBINE, Model 1838

Hall's Patent, S. North's improved breech operating mechanism, 2nd type.

U. S. CARBINE, Model 1836

Hall's Patent, S. North's improved breech operating mechanism, 3rd type.

U. S. RIFLE, Model 1817

Calibre .54.

Marked U. S. S. North, Middletown, 1829.

This rifle is known as the "Common Rifle" also made by the Springfield Armory and Harpers Ferry Armory, also by Johnson and North of Middletown, Connecticut.

S. NORTH, Middletown, Model 1816

This is the principal third contract military model.

DUELLING, or PRESENTATION PERCUSSION PISTOLS

Calibre .54.

Pistols of this type were made by his best craftsmen, probably about 1845. The case contains powder flask, nipple wrench, loading rod, bullet mould and mallet, along with screw drivers, bullets, etc.

SIMEON NORTH Flint Lock Duelling Pistol

Calibre .54. 10 inch octagon barrel.

Barrel engraved "Connecticut" and "S. NORTH, Middletown, Conn." in gold insert.

These pistols were made on special order for people of means whose fancy ran to arms. They were mostly made in cased pairs with all the necessary accessories. The government commissioned North to make this type of pistol for many of its war heroes, among whom Commodores Hull and McDonough are perhaps the most widely known. The Commodore Hull pistols are now kept in the office of the Secretary of the Navy at Washington. North was fortunate in inducing two very fine English pistol makers to come to this country, namely, Henry Ashton and his son. There could be no better testimony to their ability than the arms they made in North's shop. Almost

a quarter of a century later, the younger Henry Ashton became himself a U. S. Contractor for the excellent model 1842 government pistol.

JOHN TRUMBULL'S LETTER TO DANIEL WADSWORTH
June 23, 1827

It is always a source of amazement the many different places important source records are found. Attics, barns and dumps yield their treasures, but there have also been instances where documents were pasted as lining for boxes, where account books have been filled with pasted clippings and where damage and deterioration had to be repaired and treated by experts before identification. Leaves from other publications were often used for filler in bindings and some of the greatest book rareties exist only in a few scattered sheets found on removing book covers. This all serves to emphasize the important role institutions like this one play in the collecting and preserving of records. It also points out how alert we must always be and how dependent we are upon cooperation of members in successfully fulfilling these functions.

Recently the Society received a set of John Trumbull's *Works,* (2 volumes, Hartford 1820), in which the owner had profusely inserted engravings, letters and mementoes illustrating the text. One of these is a letter by Trumbull addressed to Daniel Wadsworth which is a fine example of material of value and general interest to be found in letters.

John Trumbull, son of John and Sarah (Whitman) Trumbull, was born April 13, 1750 (old style). He graduated from Yale College in 1767 and as poet and lawyer achieved considerable fame. His *McFingal* was reprinted more than thirty times between 1782 and 1840. He was a leader of the Hartford Wits and holder of numerous state offices, including that of judge of the superior court and judge of the supreme court of errors.

He married Sarah Hubbard, November 21, 1776 and had two sons and two daughters, one of whom, Juliana, married William Woodbridge and resided in Detroit. In 1825, the Trumbulls moved west and lived with their daughter. The letter which follows is addressed to Daniel Wadsworth, founder of the Wadsworth Atheneum, home of this Society since December 1843.

Detroit June 23^{d} 1827 ——

My Dear Sir,

Accept my thanks for your very friendly letter by M^{r} Porter; and the pleasure we received from the agreeable information of the health & welfare of Yourself & the rest of our friends & connections in Hartford, & New York. I congratulate on the increasing prosperity of your Sister's family,[1]

[1] Catherine Wadsworth, born January 19, 1774 married General Nathaniel Terry March 14, 1798. Their children were:

1. Henry Wadsworth b. Feb. 3, 1799; m. Dec., 1823 Anna Wright Hurlburt.
2. Edward Pomeroy b. Oct. 28, 1800; m. July, 1823 Sophia Hamilton Ross.
3. Alfred b. July 28, 1802; m. Sept., 1825 Clarissa Howe.
4. Harriet Wadsworth b. Aug. 7, 1804; m. Richard B. Post.
5. Adrian Russell 1806-1808.
6. Adrian Russell b. Sept. 29, 1808; m. July 25, 1836 Louisa Gillingham.
7. Charles Augustus b. Oct. 9, 1810; m. Julia Elizabeth Woodbridge.
8. Catherine Elizabeth b. Feb. 15, 1813; m. June 16, 1847 Rev. Leonard Bacon.
9. Frances Ellen b. Mar. 14, 1816; m. May 15, 1839 George Brinley.

the happy marriages of so many of her children & the pleasing prospect of a numerous offspring of her descendents, whom you may consider as your own. Nothing can give greater satisfaction to persons in advanced life, than to behold a rising generation, coming forward with the fairest expectations, to fill the places and sustain the honors & remembrance of their respectable ancestors—Mrs Woodbridge,[2] in addition to her four promising & spritely children, whom I believe you saw with her at Hartford has presented us with a fine active boy, now fourteen months old, who is a great playmate with us all & a prime favorite with his Grandmama. Little Henrietta has recovered her health and become a young rosy cheeked beauty. Mrs. Trumbull & myself enjoy, on the whole, better health, (making allowance for the decays of age) than we usually did in our earlier years, and after weathering the storms & vicissitudes of life, consider ourselves as laid up in a safe & quiet harbor,

I am extremely pleased to hear of the rapid growth & increasing prosperity of Hartford—a place where (my long residence at Yale college excepted) I have spent the happiest years of my life, & where so many of my dearest & most respectable friends still survive. I could wish once more to visit Hartford, (though some unavoidable occurrences have rendered it impracticable, this season)—to view again the faces of my friends, compare its former appearance with its present growing magnificence—& take a look at your Father's ancient mansion-house,[3] which I am glad to hear you have preserved and embellished—tho' I am sensible that these scenes would revive with tender melancholy, the memory of joys that are past, "Departed never to return".

We anticipate in hope the pleasure of seeing you & Mrs Wadsworth at Detroit in your next summer excursion. You say that in your last, you found the Switzerland of New England in the mountains & lakes of New Hampshire. Here we can show you the Flanders of America in the plains of our territory. In the peninsula of Michigan, there is scarcely a mountain as large as a hill in a Giant's cornfield, & in our northern frontier, lakes to which their Winnipissiaugee would seem a mere bathing place for a Cyclop—You may behold scenes of warfare, more important & interesting to an American,

[2] Juliana Trumbull married June 29, 1806 William Woodbridge. He was for a long time legal advisor of the Hudson's Bay and American Fur Companies. In 1814 he was appointed Secretary for Territory of Michigan, was a delegate to Congress and subsequently was Governor of the State of Michigan and United States Senator. Their children were:

1. Juliana T. b. Sept. 12, 1815
2. William Leverett b. 1817
3. John b. & d. 1820
4. Lucy Maria b. July 1822
5. Henrietta Sarah b. Jan. 25, 1824
6. Dudley Backus b. Feb. 19, 1826

[3] This house stood on the site of our present building. It was erected in 1730 by the Reverend Daniel Wadsworth, grandfather of the addressee of this letter. In the spring of 1842 he presented it to the Corporation of the Wadsworth Atheneum and the mansion house was removed to the south side of Buckingham Street where it remained until 1887 when it was razed.

than the field of Waterloo, or the battle of Trafalgar, and the Nile.[4] Detroit has fully repaired the ravages & devastation of the last war & is rapidly increasing in extent, commerce and population. Seven Steamboats are constantly plying between this port & the shores of lake Erie. The tide of emigration, which already begins to overflow in the adjacent States, is repidly bending its course into this territory. New settlements are continually springing up in every direction. During the short period of my residence here (less than two years) this city has more than doubled in the value of its buildings, and improved beyond calculation in the beauty & elegance of its appearance. A new Courthouse hath been erected, superior to any, at present exist in Connecticut, & a spacious Hotel hardly surpassed in extent, grandeur and the excellence of its accommodations, in the most splendid cities of the United States. More than fifty new dwelling houses & stores have been built, streets opening, wharfs erecting on the river, water lots filling, & all the activity & bustle of a growing commercial city. As it lies in the same parallel of latitude as North Hampton & Boston, its winters, from its inland situation, are less severe, & a snow six inches deep is quite a rarity. We have little trouble from Indians as no tribes are settled near us. Governor Cass with his train are absent in a tour to the Northern coast, of the Huron & Green Bay, for the purpos of settling treaties with the tribes in the Northwestern territory, & will not return till September. His duties in his absence devolve on M[r] Woodbridge.

I am obliged to break abruptly, as the Steamboat is just now going off.

With the greatest respect & affection from myself and Mrs Trumbull to you & Mrs Wadsworth

Your Obed[t] Serv[t]
John Trumbull

D. Wadsworth Esqr

NOTICES OF BOOKS

Kelly, J[ohn] Frederick, 1888-1947.
Early Connecticut Meetinghouses. *New York. Columbia University Press.* 1948.
2 v. 332, 360 pp. 31 cm. illus. Price $40.00.

Early Connecticut Meetinghouses, by the late J. Frederick Kelly, a study of the churches erected before 1830, just published by the Columbia University Press, is possibly the most important work on Connecticut history which has been written in many years. It contains a thoughtful history of the church society or parish, as well as an architectural study of each structure, and is admirably illustrated with photographs and measured drawings.

Anyone who reads it and gives thought to the labor which was involved in writing it cannot put it down without a feeling of amazement that any one man could have produced such a work at the same time that he was engaged in his profession and also writing several other important studies of Connecticut architecture.

[4] From 1701 until 1825, Detroit was an important military center. It had been the site of several forts and under the French, British and Americans, had suffered defeats and had been raided and laid siege to by Indians.

To secure the material which is here, Mr. Kelly must have visited all of the one hundred and sixty-nine towns in the State, and also every one of the villages in those towns. Each sketch represents many days of labor. He gives for each meetinghouse the accurate observations of a trained architect on the details of the exterior and interior. These follow an exhaustive history compiled from the records of the town, church and society records, as well as from all available books and documents relating to the subject. In addition, he, himself, took the fine photographs of the structures and their details. It is certain that no other man has climbed all those belfry stairs and explored all of those dusty attics.

Not only are the articles accurate and detailed, but also they are well and delightfully written. Anyone who knew the author will get frequent smiles from his characteristic comments on the "improvements" which have been made on the original plans.

The format is as satisfactory as the text. A difficult subject has been skillfully handled. The illustrations, on which so much depends, are well printed and the division of the work into two volumes enables one to read it in comfort. From any point of view it offers no opportunity for criticism. It is an expensive book, $40.00 for the two volumes, but even this price can hardly be expected to meet the cost of publication, when the limited circulation is considered.

It is sad to think that Mr. Kelly died before his work was published but it is pleasing to know that he lived to see it in the printer's hands and saw the proofs of it.

It is a fit monument for a man of great talent and a witness to his love for early New England craftsmanship.

Williams, Henry Lionel and Williams, Ottalie K.
Modernizing Old Houses. *Doubleday & Co., Inc., New York,* 1948.
269 pp. 26 cm. 183 drawings. Price $4.95.

The second in a series on old houses by Henry L. and Ottalie K. Williams has just been published by Doubleday. The authors, consultants on this subject for many years, have done everything of which they write. Consequently they speak from experience and a background peculiarly suited to their subject. Mr. Williams was formerly editor of the *Contractor's Record* in London and author of many books on allied subjects. Mrs. Williams is an authority on antiques. The result is a team that lucidly explains how to make an old house comfortable and practical for modern living without destroying its original charm.

There can be little argument with the timeliness of the subject. More and more owners of old houses have faced just the problems the Williams' discuss such as insulating, installing heating systems, bathrooms and fire hazards. These and many others are described interestingly for the antiquarian and practically for the prospective buyer or owner of an old house.

NEWS OF THE SOCIETY

Two excessively rare Connecticut imprints have recently been added to the Society's library. They are *A New Primer* and William Wolcott's *Grateful Reflections.*

The first of these was printed in Norwich in 1776, and consists of 32 leaves. The only other recorded copy of this little juvenile is at the John Carter Brown Library. A beautiful case of crimson crushed levant now protects the original paper wrappers.

This is the earliest extant non-New England Primer published in Connecticut. There may have been one in 1715, New London by T. Green, but no copy has been located and there are serious doubts that it was ever published. It differs from the regular New England Primer in that moral and instructive biblical sentences, the Lord's Prayer, Apostles' Creed, rhymed alphabet, John Rogers Exhortation unto his children, the Catechism, and Dialogue between Christ, Youth and the Devil, are all omitted. There are no illustrations, and the usual syllabarium goes through words of six syllables. Any primer of this date and earlier is particularly significant for it was practically the only book owned by children.

Grateful Reflections, a poem on Ticonderoga and Burgoyne's Campaign, was published anonymously in Hartford by Hudson & Goodwin. The only other known copies are at the American Antiquarian Society and Brown University. It is of particular interest to Hartford for it once belonged to George Brinley, whose library was sold at auction commencing in 1878. This copy also has the author's name, William Wolcott, supplied in the handwriting of the Reverend Doctor Thomas Robbins, an intimate friend, and the first Librarian of the Society. Various dates for printing have been suggested but the *Connecticut Courant*, also published by Hudson & Goodwin, advertised the book as "Just Published" in the issue of September 29, 1779. It is beautifully bound in full polished calf by Bedford.

These purchases were made possible by generous contributions from a number of members and friends. In order that other rareties may be acquired from time to time, additional funds are urgently needed. Contributions will be gratefully received.

The program for the winter and spring meetings promises to be unusually interesting. On February 1, 1949, Dr. Nelson R. Burr, of the Staff of the Library of Congress, will speak on "The Origin of the Republican Party in Connecticut", a timely subject in view of the recent national elections.

Thomas A. Stevens, Managing Director of the Marine Museum, at Mystic, will give an illustrated lecture, at the March 1 meeting, on the interesting work of the Marine Historical Association.

Miss Elizabeth Ormsby, of Niantic, will speak at the meeting of April 5, on the Bushnell submarine which was navigated on its famous mission by Capt. Ezra Lee, of East Lyme.

The May 3 meeting will feature as speaker Russell Denison Reddig, of Glastonbury, whose topic will be "New England Village Greens—Historical Centers of Colonial Living." This talk will be illustrated with nearly one hundred colored slides.

We are indebted to Vice-President George M. Dutcher of Middletown, Professor of History, Emeritus at Wesleyan University for the following note: Owners of copies of David Dudley Field's *Centennial Address*, published in Middletown in 1853, will note that it contains as a frontispiece a

view of Middletown from the Portland side of the river. This wood engraving by W. C. Butler of New York has as its title "City of Middletown, in 1825." The date is a misprint for 1852. This fact is not only obvious but susceptible of proof on various considerations. Owners of copies will wish to make suitable correction.

The project for the month is the relining and cleaning of a large painting of Hartford in 1824 as viewed from Lord's Hill, now called Asylum Hill. The dimensions are 39 by 50 inches, and it is estimated that the cost of restoration will not exceed $150. It has reached the point where in a few more years extensive repainting will be necessary which, of course, is what we are attempting to avoid by prompt treatment.

CONNECTICUT CHURCH BELLS

During the first period of New England history, the citizens were summoned to church on Sunday morning by the beating of a drum. As the settlement became better established and the meetinghouse grew in importance, there was a natural desire to have on it a steeple and a bell. Some of these bells came from England. One or two were known to have been of Spanish origin and came to this country as ballast or junk, by way of the West Indies. However, it was not long before a demand for brass castings caused the establishment of brass foundries. These had to do whatever kind of work was needed, as is shown by the advertisement of Isaac Doolittle, of New Haven, who called himself a "jack-of-all-trades", which included bell founding.

In Hartford we had Enos Doolittle, who was a brass founder and clockmaker, but who apparently learned the bell business from a partner, Jesse Goodyear, of Hamden, who had learned his trade with Isaac, of New Haven. After the death of Enos, the bell-founding business was carried on by his son, James, who was listed in the 1888 Directory as bell founder, at 24 Mills Street.

Undoubtedly, it was James who cast his bells with the inscription "Doolittle fecit for W.B.B." (or Ward, Bartholomew & Brainard), and the date. East Canaan, Cheshire, East Haddam and West Hartford have such bells. The only other bell founders mentioned by Mr. Kelly are Isaac Doolittle, of New Haven, and Fenton & Cochran, of New Haven. The Newtown bell was cast in Fairfield, but no maker is mentioned. The purchase of a bell seems to have been delegated to a committee, in most cases, and the maker's name appears in the records only occasionally.

Ward, Bartholomew & Brainard were for some years a leading firm of hardware merchants in Hartford, and apparently had a reputation around the State which made it possible for them to act as agents for Doolittle and get this business. The records available do not show any bells made by Enos Doolittle, nor any marked by other makers.

The Price of these Bulletins is ten cents each.